

The bottom letters of Type P73 stand for «ХОДЫНСКОЕ ОТДЕЛЕНИЕ» khodyinsk division, as is evidenced by the postmark normally found on this perfin. The meaning of khodyinsk is not known but it most probably is the name of a district or suburb of Moscow. In Baedeker's Russia of 1914 mention is made of a place called Khodyinskoe Pole or Field located to the north west of Moscow just past the race course on the left hand side of the St.Petersburg Road. Oddly enough, this perfin is not recorded by Mazur.

Type P74 is possibly a variety of Type P75 with the Roman numerals missing.

In his collection Eric Peel has two very fine examples of money transfer forms with Moscow perfins through the stamps.

The first (see Ill.1) covers the postal transfer of 25 roubles from Riga to Moscow and is stamped to the value of 25 kopecks with Arms stamps (1,4 and 20k) which are postmarked Riga, serial f, 5.5.14 and bear the perfin of Moscow's 40th division (Type P40). The front of the card also bears a boxed cachet with the words «За доставку на дому уплачено.» Paid for delivery to the home [of the addressee], another boxed cachet with the words Riga centre followed by a number, and a control mark with the Imperial eagle and the words underneath «контроль переводовъ» control of transfers. On the reverse are 3 Moscow postmarks - 40b and 40e, both dated 7.5.14, and «ЭКСП.ВЫД.ДЕНЕГ» office for the issue/payment of money No.15, dated 8.5.14.

The second (see Ill.2) covers the postal transfer of 75 roubles 25 kopecks from Vindava to the Moscow office of the Moscow-Vindava-Rybinsk Railway and is stamped with a 35k Arms stamp which is postmarked Vindava, serial a, 21.1.15 and bears the perfin of Moscow's VIth Ekspeditsiya (Type P72). The front of the card also bears an unboxed cachet with the words «Доставка на дом оплачена.» Delivery to the home [of the addressee] has been paid, and a numbered label with the words on the first line underneath the number "Vindava, Kurl." and on the second line «Лифт.Контр.Пал.» Lifland Control Board. On the reverse are two Moscow postmarks - 6th Eksp., serial s, dated 23.1.15, and «ЭКСП.ВЫД.ДЕН.» office for the issue/payment of money No.11, dated 27.1.15.

Both cards are standard Riga Postal and Telegraph District issue, are receipted on the back, stamped paid and the counterfoils have been detached. Each card also has 2 punch holes on the left-hand side and a third unusually positioned in the bottom centre.

PERFINS ISSUED BY OTHER OFFICES

With the exception of just a few other offices very little is known with any degree of certainty about the meaning and location of official Russian perfins used outside of Moscow. The few exceptions include:

Odessa

Type P83, the letters standing for «Одесская почтовая контора» Odessa Post Office. This is probably the second most commonly recorded perfin and as with Moscow, the majority of the postmarks found on this perfin are local ones.

In his collection Jack Moyes has a quite exceptional block of 16 x 1r Romanov stamps with this perfin postmarked Odessa 6b and dated 21.4.15 (see Ill.3).

Tiflis

There are 3 recorded types of this perfin with Arabic numerals 1-3 under the letters (Types P88-P90). Although a few people believe that the letters stand for «телеграфная контора» telegraph office, it is now generally accepted that the letters stand for «Тифлисская контора» Tiflis office. This is probably the third most commonly recorded type of perfin but, unlike Moscow and Odessa, most of the postmarks found on them are not local ones. Type P88 is by far the scarcest.

In his collection Boris Pritt has a piece of card with 3 stamps (3 and 5k Arms and 2r Romanov) postmarked Moscow 2 EKSP, serial v, dated 24.8.16 and with 2 clear impressions of the Tiflis 2 perfin.

Vladivostok

Type P79, the letters almost certainly standing for «Владивосточный почта (мть)» Vladivostok Post Office. Less than half the postmarks found on this perfin are local ones but Jack Moyes again in his collection has a superb

block of 4 x 5r Romanov stamps with this perfin postmarked Vladivostok, serial u and dated 11.11.15 (see Ill.4). This perfin is also recorded used on Soviet stamps up to 1928.

Lodz

Type P92, the letters standing for «Лодзинская центральная почтово-телеграфная контора» Lodz central post and telegraph office. All recorded postmarks on this perfin are local ones, being either Lodz or Lodz Tsentr.Petrok.

Minsk

Type P93. Mazur records two types of this perfin¹, the first spelling Minsk with a hard sign at the end, the second without a hard sign but with a stop after the «К» followed by a Cyrillic «Р». In fact they are both the same type, one being perforated from the front, the other from the back.

In his collection Dick Scheper has a superb example of this type used on a money transfer form (see Ill.5). It covers the postal transfer of 2,047 roubles 3 kopecks (for such a large amount of money it is strange that it was not transferred telegraphically)

from Dolginovo in Vilna guberniya to the Treasury in Minsk and is stamped to the value of 5 roubles 25 kopecks with 5 x 1r Romanov stamps and a 25k Arms stamp, which are postmarked Dolginovo, Vil., serial b, 27.2.15. The front of the card also bears a numbered label with the words on the two lines underneath the number "Dolginovo Vilen. gub." and on the bottom line «Вилен. Контр.Пал.» Vilna Control Board. On the reverse are two postmarks of Minsk Gub., serial z dated 3.3.15 and serial v? dated 4.3.15.

The card, from which the counterfoil has been detached, is marked Vilna Postal and Telegraph District, and stamped paid, but is not otherwise receipted on the back.

In his collection Magnus Werner has a fine strip of 5 x 2k Romanov stamps with two clear impressions of this perfin with apparently no postmark on them whatsoever. He also has a piece of card with postage stamps on both sides cancelled Groitsyi, serial a?, in Warsaw guberniya, and dated 11.12.14. The same collector also has a similar piece with a 3k and a 10k stamp

perforated from the reverse side. The stamps themselves appear not to be postmarked but underneath one of the stamps is part of a circular postmark which could be Smolensk.

Kiev

Type P91. As with Minsk Mazur records two types of this perfin, the first reading Kiev with a hard sign at the end followed by the figure 2, the latter without a hard sign but with a stop after the «В» followed by a Cyrillic «Р». Once again I believe that both are the same type, the one being perforated from the front, the other from the back.

This type, which was erroneously recorded by both Maxa and Mazur without the final two Cyrillic letters «Р.» (short for city or town) after the 2, is magnificently illustrated in *Rossica* No.102/103, 1983, pp 121-123, by courtesy of Moshe Shmueli of Tel Aviv (reproduced here as Ill.6). It shows a complete parcel post card or Bulletin d'exposition, in Russian «Сопроводительный адрес», with a declared value of 150 roubles, sent by a firm in Kiev to a gentleman in Jerusalem, Palestine, via Odessa. The card was dispatched from the 2nd City Post and Telegraph Office and the counterfoil, which is still attached, is postmarked Kiev 2b?, 9.12.10. The card bears Arms stamps to the value of 98 kopecks (1k, 2k, 20k and 3 x 25k) on which there are 3 clear impressions of this perfin but which are otherwise uncanceled. Unfortunately the reverse side of the card is not illustrated.

Smyela

Type P94. This is arguably one of the most puzzling of Russia's perfins. Smyela is a small town in Kiev guberniya, situated about 100 miles south east of Kiev with a station on the Bakhmach- Odessa line of the Moscow-Kiev-Voronezh railway. There is no obvious reason why such a small place should have its own official perfin although, according to the official 1916 Post Office list, it did have its own Post and Telegraph office. Nevertheless a perfin from this town is recorded and several examples are known.

In his collection Boris Pritt has a piece of card with 3 Arms stamps (25k and 2 x 50k) clearly impressed with this perfin. The stamps are postmarked Moskva, 1g, and dated 24.11.17.

In one of his articles², Mazur records 6 similar pieces from accompanying addresses [to parcels] belonging to a Moscow philatelist who, he says, inherited them from his grandfather who had been a postal worker, as follows:

(a) 12 postage stamps of different denominations, issued between 1909 and 1917, totalling 3r 7k, cancelled Petrograd, 2 p.o., serial g, and dated 11.11.17;

(b) 6 stamps of different denominations totalling 5r 20k, cancelled Moscow, 2nd Ekspeditsiya, * *, and dated 15.12.17;

(c) 16 stamps totalling 7r 65k, cancelled Kharkov, parcel post division, serial zh, and dated 18.11.17;

(d) 7 stamps totalling 4r 80k, addressed to some factory, cancelled Odessa, serial zh, and dated 25.11.17 plus two similar pieces with the same cancellation and date stamp.

Unfortunately not one of these pieces had the full address of the addressee or an arrival stamp.

Warsaw

Type P80, the letters almost certainly standing for «Варшавская почтовая контора» Warsaw Post Office. Although only 7 examples of this perfin are recorded in the table, 5 of which are without any or an identifiable postmark, the remaining 2 both have clear cancellations of Warsaw and it is therefore reasonable to assume that this is where this perfin was located.

Arkhangel'sk

There are two quite distinct types of perfin from this office (Types P77 and P78), and 2 sub-types of the second type. The letters of the first almost certainly stand for «Архангельская контора» Arkhangel'sk office and those of the second most probably for «Архангельский округ» Arkhangel'sk [postal and telegraph] district. Maxa originally thought that both these types were private perfins. Over half the postmarks recorded with the first type and just under half of those with the second type are local ones, either of Arkhangel'sk itself or of places within Arkhangel'sk guberniya.

Irkutsk

Types P81 and P82, with the top two letters of the perfins most probably standing for Irkutsk and the

bottom letters A and B distinguishing two separate offices. Although none of the recorded postmarks on stamps with these perfins are from Irkutsk itself, the letter combination and the absence of stops after the letters make it a reasonable assumption that this was their location.

That still leaves another dozen or so recorded perfin types which, through insufficient postmark data, currently remain unidentified. In the table at the end of this article I have tried, wherever possible, to suggest some possibilities for these.

One of the most frustrating perfins is the «П.О.» type with Arabic numerals underneath (Types P84-P87). This must have been a large postal town or district and just possibly might stand for either «Пермский округ» Perm (postal and telegraph) district or «Приамурский округ» Priamur (postal and telegraph) district, both of which are mentioned in the official 1916 Post Office list along with «Петроградский округ» Petrograd (postal and telegraph) district, which it cannot be because of the recorded dates of usage. For the same reason the letters of Type P105 cannot stand for St.Petersburg.

PUNCH HOLES

Although these are not strictly within the scope of this article, it is worth mentioning that they are much commoner than perfins and are recorded used over roughly the same period 1910-18. The stamps themselves are invariably cancelled with postmarks from all over Russia but now and then one finds the same office occurring again and again. Three examples of the latter are Riga, Odessa and Moscow 2nd Ekspeditsiya.

In Boris Pritt's collection (see Ill.7) there is a superb example of a complete transfer form with two large oval punch holes and 6 smaller round punch holes, possibly applied at different offices, through the stamps. The card, which has a boxed red cachet of Warsaw guberniya, covers the money transfer by telegraph of 1500 roubles from Sosnovitsyi in Petrokov guberniya to Derazhnya in Podol'sk guberniya. It is stamped to the value of 5 roubles 15 kopecks with Arms stamps (25k imprinted, 4 x 35k and 3r50k) and postmarked Sosnovitsyi Petrok., serial b, 13.6.12.

The detachable counterfoil bears the postmark of the receiving office Derazhnya Pod., serial a, dated 15.6.12. The curious feature of this card is that the counterfoil is still attached to the form, normally it would have been detached when the money was delivered and handed over to the addressee, and the back of the form is not receipted.

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS AND OBSERVATIONS

It is apparent from the evidence, both documentary and philatelic, that Russian perfin were used for a variety of purposes.

Private perfins are relatively easy to understand, being used in the same way as in the West and most other countries. They were applied to the postage stamps by private firms prior to their use but, according to the documentary evidence, they were only officially authorised on prepaid business mail addressed abroad and then only on very strict conditions. This would seem to suggest that any postmarks found on them must represent the town or locality where the firm was based.

Apart from those perfins used by private firms in Finland, such as Types P99 and P109, very few other private perfins seem to have existed. Those that did seem to have originated from the Western or Baltic provinces and most, if not all, bear Latin, rather than Cyrillic, characters. This would be consonant with more foreign trade being done and private firms (including subsidiaries of foreign firms) adopting foreign business practices more readily in those areas. Thus Type P104 is recorded used in Riga and Type P98 used in Orel. The one, maybe more, apparent exception, with Cyrillic characters, is Type P97 recorded used in Lodz.

Official perfins are much more complicated. What is clear from the evidence is that they were applied after, or simultaneously with, the postage stamps being used and generally from the top. The relatively few perfins that exist reversed probably come from cards or forms that had postage stamps on both sides.

According to the documentary evidence, official perfins were intended to be used primarily on (money) transfer forms and addresses

accompanying parcels (parcel cards) with perfins being applied to the stamps by the receiving office. Although many such documents have survived, it would appear that extremely few exist with official perfins on them and those that I know of are recorded above and in the table. The answer to this apparent riddle is difficult to explain, other than that, maybe, the rules were not generally observed or different practices were applied.

The vast majority of official perfins are also cancelled with the postmark of either the dispatch office or that of their local office. A very few, however, appear to have no cancellation whatsoever. An explanation to this may lie in the parcel card, referred to above, that was sent from Kiev to Jerusalem in 1910 where the stamps unusually bear the perfins of the dispatch office (Type P91) but are otherwise uncanceled. Could it be that the stamps on such items, when addressed abroad, were, with official authority, deliberately not postmarked by the dispatch office but cancelled with a perfin instead?

How then to explain official perfins that were cancelled, as with many of the Moscow perfins, with postmarks of their local office. The answer to this, I believe, is contained in the documentary evidence.

Prior to 1924 no postage due stamps existed in Russia and mail that was insufficiently prepaid was marked «ДОПЛАТИТЬ» to pay in one form or another. Circular No.27 of 18.5.11, issued by the chief of the Central Postal and Telegraph Administration, refers, in connection with additional payment [postage due] mail, to the sticking of postage stamps "in the book of finances No.9", prior to the book being sent "to the Control Boards".

The fact that most perfins on high denominational stamps are cancelled with postmarks of their local office would seem to indicate therefore that the stamps themselves were used for some internal accounting purpose and that money received, and perhaps also money paid out on money transfers, were recorded internally by the sticking of postage stamps in a book or books, which were perforated before the transactions were officially audited.

(To be continued)